THE

ASSOCIATORS

VINDICATED;

AND THE

PROTESTERS

ANSWERED.

Hæc inter bonos Amicitia, inter malos Factio eſt.
SALLUST, BELL. JUGURTH.

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THE ASSOCIATORS VINDICATED, &c.

IT is not one of the leaſt advantages reſulting from Britiſh Liberty, that all queſtions, as well of foreign as domeſtic politics, are daily and hourly canvaſſed, not only in the Senate, and by productions from the preſs, but in almoſt every circle of thinking and reaſonable men. The nature of the Engliſh government baniſhes diſtruſt from reaſoners on theſe ſubjects; they are ever new with the day that gives them birth, and in the preſent hour become peculiarly intereſting, not ſo much from their novelty, as their importance.—The perfect ſecurity with which political ſentiments, however free, are communicated by ſpeech, forms a noble ſupplement, not to ſay a ſubſtantial baſis, to the ſo juſtly valued freedom

of our preſs. Every Briton is by birth-right a politician, and I know not of any knowledge more neceſſary to a free citizen of a free ſtate, than a perfect comprehenſion of the rights and duties incident to ſo enviable a title.—One mode of acquiring ſome inſight into this ſpecies of politics is by converſation; and it is principally owing to ſome arguments urged in that way, with apparent plauſibility and candor, againſt the County Aſſociations now forming in this kingdom, that the preſent attempt is made to reſcue the intentions of thoſe meetings from undeſerved obloquy, and to ſhew that, if they have been attacked with eaſe, they are not difficult to defend.

I ſhall not harraſs my readers with arguments tending to prove the legality of the petitions now ſo rapidly pouring in upon the lower Houſe of Parliament, neither will I trouble myſelf to enquire into the truth of the allegations ſtated in them: for a demonſtration of the former, I ſhall content myſelf with briefly referring to that ſecond (though not leſs momentous) Magna Charta, *The Bill of Rights*; for proof of the latter (ſo repeatedly required to be produced by the men who have been ſo fatally inſtrumental to the exiſtence of the facts themſelves) I appeal to that dear-bought

bought experience, and heart-rending conviction which every honeſt man feels, and laments. Having premiſed thus much as to the Petitions, let us enter upon a candid and diſpaſſionate enquiry into the objections alledged againſt the Aſſociations and Committees of Correſpondence, the principal of which are nervouſly expreſſed in the language of the Suſſex Proteſt, "That the "reſolution of appointing a Committee of "Correſpondence, with the declared pur-"poſe of forming General Aſſociations, "apparently tends to over-rule the Legiſ-"lature, to introduce meaſures inconſiſtent "with, and ſubverſive of, our preſent ex-"cellent conſtitution, and leading to anar-"chy and confuſion." This charge, ſo ſerious in its nature, becomes ſtill more ſo, when we peruſe the very reſpectable titles and names ſubſcribed to it, amongſt which is the ſignature of a miniſter* high in office, and believed to enjoy no ſmall portion of the Royal Confidence. Nor will it be leſs unpleaſing to the eyes of a Committee-man, when he knows the ſubſtance to have been adopted by a young and noble-minded Marquis†, who, after having ſacrificed one place of honor and profit, has been deprived of another of conſiderable weight

* Lord George Germaine. † Marquis of Carmarthen.

weight and influence, for a firm adherence in Parliament to that, which he conceived to be, the Voice of the People, expreſſed by their Petitions. Before I attempt a refutation of this charge, ſo alarming in the abſtract, and pointed by the application againſt thoſe reſpectable individuals who compoſe the Committees, I muſt beg leave previouſly to glance at another general topic of cenſure, and ſuppoſed ground of objection, which applies not only to them, but to the great body of Petitioners throughout the kingdom. The leaders of this buſineſs, it hath been ſaid, are actuated only by a factious party ſpirit, and the bulk of the people ſigning are conſequentially mere tools to the ſiniſter intentions of Oppoſition. The ideas of Oeconomy and Reformation are termed "*ſpecious fallacies*," and impracticable theories, which the promoters of theſe Meetings are perfectly ſenſible of, and would even be unwilling to have the Prayer of their Petitions granted. Let us examine what degree of attention ought to be paid to reaſoning of this nature. Men who have ſo repeatedly counteracted the views of Adminiſtration, always have, and ever will be, branded as factious and intereſted by thoſe whom they oppoſe, be their Oppoſition in particular inſtances ever ſo well founded, or their motives ever ſo pure.

pure. Neither are we to believe implicitly that the intentions of men are corrupt, while their actions (from which alone we can judge of thoſe intentions) are open, avowedly deſigned for the weal of the republic, and coincided in by independent characters of all parties and deſcriptions. As to the impracticability of a reform, or compliance with the Petitions, that is now *ſubjudice*; if the plan propoſed by Mr. Burke, to anſwer this great end (a plan which extorted praiſe and admiration from all ſides of the Houſe) ſhould fail in all its branches, ſtill the Petitioners will be juſtified from the ſubject and mode of that ſcheme, in having conceived that abuſes of the public treaſure did exiſt, and that the remedy for ſo great an evil, at leaſt merited the diſcuſſion of Parliament. Beſides all theſe topics of cenſure, (for it would degrade the name of argument to give ſuch futile calumnies that appellation) it has been further urged, that the times are ſeaſonable only for great exertion, and that the Wheels of Government will be impeded by Reformation. "*Fas eſt et ab "hoſte doceri.*" Our political, though perfidious enemy has exemplified to us, that it is practicable at one and the ſame time to act vigorouſly in an offenſive war, and to accompliſh a beneficial reform of internal

nal œconomy. The late ſubſcribers of a few hundred pounds towards invigorating the war, were extolled as friends to Adminiſtration, and to their country; while thoſe who point out the means of ſaving annually the total of all the money ever ſubſcribed tenfold, are branded with the ſtigma of Faction, not to ſay Rebellion, and by a contradiction in terms irreconcileable to common ſenſe, are ſaid to clog the operations of Government. If, indeed, the acquiſition of miniſterial power were the true motive for the conduct of thoſe who have forwarded the County Petitions, never did men act more unadviſedly, or with greater inconſiſtency to their own views, for by accepting the ſyſtem ſo much recommended, ſo fervently prayed to be adopted, adminiſtration would neceſſarily acquire the confidence of the people, and a vigour to their meaſures, the advantages of which they can at preſent know only theoretically, having hitherto invariably experienced the melancholy reverſe.

But to return to the individual charges againſt the Committees of Correſpondence, and Aſſociations, which, in my apprehenſion, may be comprized in a ſingle aſſertion, That they are unconſtitutional. This, however, being a term too much undefined

undefined for argument, we muſt have recourſe to the Suſſex Proteſt, which affirms them to be unconſtitutional, becauſe they tend to over-rule the Legiſlature, and to introduce anarchy and confuſion. It has been boldly propheſied, that if they riſe to any height, the repreſentatives of the people would form a mere Court of Record to regiſter their edicts. Political, like common ſecond-ſight, preſents to us none but calamitous and improbable events.

In order to ſhew the fallacy of theſe poſitions, it will be neceſſary firſt to recur to the origin, and to ſtate the progreſs of theſe Aſſembles, and afterwards to abſolve or condemn them by a compariſon of their views and proceedings, with a few leading principles of our conſtitution. Towards the cloſe of the year 1779, in a converſation which paſſed among ſome of the firſt Freeholders of the county of York, relative to the ſituation of public affairs, a Petition from that county was deemed a meaſure of great propriety and importance. The office of High Sheriff being then vacant by the death of Thomas Duncombe, Eſquire, theſe Gentlemen having found others of large landed property coinciding in their opinion, by public advertiſement requeſted

requeſted a meeting of the Freeholders of the county at large, in order to take the national concerns into conſideration. Now it is rather remarkable, and not eaſily to be obviated by the Libellers of this and the other Aſſemblies, its immediate offſpring, that the Gentlemen who firſt conceived the idea, and a great part of thoſe who afterwards acted on that idea in the place of the High Sheriff, from the neceſſity of the caſe, had been the uniform oppoſers of the Marquis of Rockingham in all county conteſts, where his intereſt had been exerted. Hence it muſt be admitted, and ever be without denial, that the Yorkſhire Meeting originated independent of party, from men whoſe intereſts are in common with thoſe of the State; who muſt always, from their large landed property, riſe or fall with the credit of the nation; the unambitious tenor of whoſe lives, together with the obſcurity of whoſe names in a public line, amply evince, that no private political views could give any bias to their meaſures. The meeting was more reſpectably attended than any one ever remembered upon a ſimilar occaſion: we are informed by the patriotic member for the county, that the room contained poſſeſſors of 800,000*l.* *per annum* in landed eſtates. The buſineſs was conducted with a temper

a temper and moderation ſuitable to the magnitude of its object. If any heat appeared, it was produced by ſome very unconſtitutional expreſſions which unguardedly dropped from a lately much reſpected character in the county, through the ebullition of his courtly zeal. A petition however was unanimouſly agreed upon, which, for the reſpectfulneſs and energy of expreſſion that are the characteriſtics of it, has had the honour of being copied by ſome counties, and paraphraſed by others. After ſtating " the diminiſhed reſources " and growing burthens of this country, " the Petitioners obſerve with grief, that " notwithſtanding the calamitous and im- " poveriſhed condition of the nation, much " public money had been improvidently " ſquandered, and that many individuals " enjoyed ſinecure places, efficient places " with exorbitant emoluments, and pen- " ſions unmerited by public ſervice, to a " large and ſtill encreaſing amount; " whence the Crown had acquired a great " and unconſtitutional influence, which, " if not checked, might ſoon prove fatal " to the liberties of this country: con- " ceiving, as they did, that the true end " of every legitimate government is not " the emolument of any individual, but " the welfare of the community; and

" conſidering that by the conſtitution of " this realm, the national purſe is entruſt- " ed in a peculiar manner to the cuſtody " of the Honourable Houſe they were " addreſſing, they moſt earneſtly requeſted, " that before any additional grants were " made beyond the produce of the preſent " taxes, an enquiry might be made into, " and correction had of, the groſs abuſes " in the public expenditure; and that " effectual meaſures might be taken to " reduce all exorbitant emoluments; to " reſcind and aboliſh all ſinecure places " and unmerited penſions, and to appro- " priate the produce to the neceſſities of " the State, as to the wiſdom of Parlia- " ment ſhould ſeem meet." This Petition being carried *nemine contradicente*, It was further reſolved, " That a Committee " of ſixty-one Gentlemen ſhould be ap- " pointed to carry on the neceſſary cor- " reſpondence for effectually promoting " the Object of the Petition, and to pre- " pare a Plan of an Aſſociation *on legal* " *and conſtitutional grounds*, to ſupport " that laudable reform, and ſuch other " meaſures as might conduce to reſtore " the Freedom of Parliament, to be pre- " ſented at the adjourned meeting in Eaſter " week." I ſcarcely have occaſion to obſerve, that a Reſolution, in ſubſtance the ſame

ſame as the above, hath been ſince adopted by the other petitioning counties, which denomination is already become nearly general throughout the kingdom. Here then is the "*Fomes Peccati*"; this, ſay the Proteſters, is a dangerous combination, and unconſtitutional, inaſmuch as it tends to dictate to the Legiſlature. If theſe aſſertions are not an offſpring from affected ignorance of the genuine ſpirit of our conſtitution, a very ſlight examination will diſcover that the right of petitioning, and the right of aſſociation, are founded on the ſame baſis—a baſis not to be whiſpered away by the inſinuations of miniſterial dependents, or undermined by the puſillanimity of men who ought to hold it dearer to them than their lives. This fundamental principle, is a natural controul reſiding in the people at large over thoſe to whom, for convenience, they have entruſted their legiſlative powers, which latent right muſt never be called into action before the truſtees have actually ſwerved, or are likely to deviate from the primary cauſe of their creation, which can be no other than the *weal* of the commonwealth. Whatever may be the form of government, ſtill it is not in the power of any man to have ſurrendered up, or delegated this right; he hath it reſerved to him by a law antece-

dent and paramount to all poſitive laws of men *; it is neceſſary for ſelf-preſervation, and God and Nature forbid him ſo far to put himſelf into the power of another, as to neglect that firſt law of animal creation. The people muſt neceſſarily judge for themſelves, when and in what manner to exerciſe, and put in force this dormant principle; though they have not by the conſtitution of the ſociety any ſuperior power to determine and give effective ſentence in the caſe: various are the modes in which it operates, being ever proportioned to the apprehended danger, from the humble Petition and peaceable Aſſociation, to the laſt ſolemn and awful appeal to Heaven. "Nor † let any one think, this lays a "perpetual foundation for diſorder; for "this operates not, till the inconveniency "is ſo great, that the majority feel it, and "are weary of it, and find a neceſſity to "have it amended." Still I foreſee it will be inſiſted upon, that this controul, reſiding in the democracy of the ſtate, may, if allowed, be in ſome caſes productive of "anarchy and confuſion." However alarming theſe words may juſtly appear to moderate men, I might ſafely affirm, that with all their attendant horrors, which from their

* Mr. Locke on Government, B. II. Sect. 168.
† Ibid.

their nature can only be temporary, they are infinitely leſs to be dreaded than abſolute ſubjugation, under whatever ſpecious form impoſed upon a ſtate.* Inſtances in our own hiſtory occur, where this right of the people, when exerciſed, hath produced the moſt beneficial effects, without cauſing a diſſolution of the government, even for a moment. *Magna Charta* was the fruit of an *Aſſociation*. The Convention Parliament was an aſſociation of the nobleſt kind. The leading men of that day, by means of a juſtifiable ſubtilty ſteered clear of thoſe diſorders, which had been ſo recently experienced, as conſequent on a declared diſſolution of the government. *The Kingly Eſtate* they conſidered as ſubſiſting in notion and judgment of law, when they proclaimed a perſonal abdication of the monarchy, and the throne vacant. The great object of the convened eſtates, was to reſtore the ancient form of government with renewed purity, not to conſtitute another. The delicacy, with which they acted, compaſſed the greateſt and happieſt revolution ever known, with the leaſt confuſion and bloodſhed. Theſe are not caſes of abſolute diſſolution, but are called, caſes *tending* to diſſolution. The diſtinction appears refined,

* Locke on Government, P. 2. Sect. 225.

refined, but is well warranted, if it ſecure the peace of ſociety in an arduous criſis. I cite and rely upon theſe inſtances, not as ſtrictly analagous to our preſent ſituation, but to ſhew that the principle is not unprecedented, dangerous, or theoretical. As it is not confined to any form of government, ſo is it applicable as well to the legiſlative as executive power. Some very reſpectable law authorities*, have indeed, by a figure rather too bold, ſtyled the former *Omnipotent*; this attribute is borrowed from the Deity, and ſo long as Parliament preſerve the other divine attributes of goodneſs, wiſdom, and incorruptibility, there will be no reaſon to queſtion their omnipotence. I have not, however, in following my principles through all their conſequences, yet affirmed, neither do I intend, "*Ære ciere viros*," by affirming, that the great queſtion is now in agitation between the government and the people. The Petitioners and Aſſociators feel heavy burthens, and ſee great dangers, but they ſtill keep moſt ſtrictly within the pale of the Conſtitution. Though firm, they are ſupplicant, reſpectful, though united. What ſtronger proof can be given of their love for Parliament, than their jealouſy of its honor. The

* Lord Coke, Sir William Blackſtone, &c.

The ſteps taken by them are the moſt probable, to render all violent meaſures as unneceſſary, as they are diſagreeable.

Juſtly apprehending, that if the national ſenſe could be fairly collected upon any political points, and that ſenſe expreſſed by the legal mode of petitioning, the repreſentatives of the people would feel themſelves bound to pay the ſtricteſt attention; and further conceiving, that if by communication of ſentiments, the complaint could be carried to the door of the Houſe, as it were, *unâ voce*, and that from Correſpondence, Aſſociation, or any other means, the different bodies of men likely to petition might be induced to point the finger to one wound, and to pray for one remedy, that wound muſt be cloſed, that remedy would be applied. The queſtion will not now turn upon the numbers that have appeared for or againſt the Petitions; it is indifferent as to the juſtice of the conſtitutional principle, whether ſix thouſand, or ſix million may become aſſociators. I do not mean to grant, that a majority hath not already appeared in favour of theſe proceedings; the reverſe of which appears to me to be the truth. I only conceive all ſuch calculations to be foreign to the preſent diſcuſſion.

Nothing

Nothing can be more unfair, than to preſume what may be done raſhly or violently, by theſe bodies of men who avow at preſent none, but the moſt ſtrictly conſtitutional purpoſes, and purſue their ends by the moſt moderate meaſures. America and Ireland have been mentioned as ſufficiently recent examples to indicate the danger of aſſociations. It is not to be denied, but that our now alienated Colonies, by a natural and juſt progreſſion, proportioned to the injuries they had either actually or fancifully received from the Mother Country, commencing with Committees of Safety, and other combinations of the people, at length transferred the Legiſlature from its ancient baſis into the hands of a Congreſs; ſome will ſtyle this Rebellion, others juſtifiable Reſiſtance; even if this great queſtion were decided, the inſtance would not weigh a feather againſt the Meetings now in argument; for we are not reſiſting the dominion of a Legiſlature, in whoſe creation we had no part, which can be done by force alone, but we are endeavouring to render our own Repreſentatives more incorrupt, and the real Truſtees of the people. The military aſſociations of Ireland, not habited in the ſober garb of peace, but attended with "all the pomp and circum-"ſtance of war," we have ſeen productive

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of no other conſequences than a juſt participation with ourſelves of the benefits, which God and nature had ſo liberally beſtowed upon them, but which had been ſo long and ſo injuriouſly with-held from their enjoyment. Though they ſtill have much to demand*, and poſſibly power ſufficient to enforce the grant; theſe formidable bodies reſt gratefully contented with our late conceſſions, and point thoſe bayonets againſt the menacing invaders of their iſland, which might have been fatally employed in civil commotion. How are the voices of the diſcontented drowned in general acclamations of reconciliation and gratitude! This example of popular moderation is, I truſt, a ſufficient anſwer to thoſe, who, with an inauſpicious ſpirit of prophecy foreſee the brand of civil diſcord lighted up in this country, by humble Petitioners, and orderly Aſſociators. As the premiſes for ſuch concluſions, reaſoners after this manner muſt pronounce the Legiſlature to be wilfully obſtinate, and intimately corrupted, which the Petitioners have not even dared to imagine, much leſs to expreſs. Parliament muſt firſt declare all Reformation and Oeconomy—in a word, every thing contained in the Prayers of the different

* Mr. Dobbes's Letter to Lord North.

Petitions unneceſſary, and impracticable, before the Committees and Aſſociations can, even upon the principles imputed to them, find a pretext for putting thoſe principles into action.

Another ground of objection is, that theſe proceedings tend to over-rule the Legiſlature, and dictate to a body which it is our duty to obey. If theſe Petitions are not imperative in themſelves, I am really at a loſs to conceive how they become ſo by the Aſſociations. Every man who either addreſſes, petitions, or remonſtrates, in conjunction with others, is in fact as much aſſociated with them, and as much intereſted in the iſſue of his prayer, as if he called himſelf expreſſly an aſſociator. His feelings will not be leſs poignant, his reſentments more moderate from an omiſſion of that circumſtance, if his hopes are diſappointed. We ſhould, indeed, pay a very indifferent compliment to the firmneſs of the Legiſlature, which in its name alone "is a Tower of Strength," if we could for a moment imagine that its members were ſo very puſillanimous that they would be biaſſed, or awed from the performance of their real duty by the mere names of Aſſociators and Committee-men. Their conduct in the late American war ſufficiently

ently vindicate their courage from ſuch an aſperſion: in purſuit of the mere point of legiſlative honor, what have they not ſacrificed? Yes, even wealth, dominion, commerce, and conqueſt. Nor is the Engliſh ſpirit ſunk ſo low, that upon a great and conſtitutional queſtion, it ſhould require the feeble incentives of County Aſſociations and Committees of Correſpondence, to be rouſed into activity. Is it dictatorial to ſupplicate? Are command and counſel ſynominous? One would almoſt imagine from reaſoning of this complexion, that the modern Petitioners were armed like ſtern conſpirators againſt Cæſar, and Caſca like, only waited for the refuſal, inſtantly to ſtrike the blow.

What then, it may be enquired, are the conſtitutional ends for which theſe Aſſemblies have appointed Committees, adjourned their Meetings, and are forming Aſſociations?

If indeed, as it has been repreſented to alarm the timorous, theſe Committees are inveſted with all the rights and powers of the Aſſemblies by whom they are appointed, then are they in truth highly unconſtitutional and dangerous. What ſecurity could be given, that theſe newly created Repre-

ſentatives would be more incorrupt, or attached to the intereſts of the people, than thoſe to whom we petition for redreſs? It would neither be politic, or even poſſible to transfer thoſe rights, which muſt ever be inherent in the great body of the people, into other hands. Upon the principles already diſcuſſed, theſe controuling powers, reſiding in the great body of the governed, muſt from their nature be incommunicable; they would affect equally all modes of repreſentation: but to conſtitute a new ſpecies, while the ancient one ſubſiſts, would be to erect *Imperium in Imperio*, the moſt abſurd of all political ſoleciſms.

It is not therefore to delegate, but to exerciſe thoſe powers, that the County Meetings have been held. The grand deſideratum of all popular aſſemblies is found to be the want of an active, permanent, and at the ſame time dependant power to execute their reſolves, without exceeding the limits of their will. From the different avocations of the individuals, who compoſe theſe numerous and mixed aſſemblies, their meetings cannot be frequent, their duration cannot be long. To ſupply this great defect, it was found neceſſary to appoint a ſet of men of their own body, who had leiſure

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and abilities to act ſubſervient to the grand views of the General Meetings, during the intervals of their adjournments. Theſe are the mere procurators of their conſtituents, and have neither eyes to ſee, ears to hear, or tongues to ſpeak, but as they are directed. Their power is limited in its extent, ſo alſo is it confined as to duration: their conduct muſt be either approved or condemned, when the aggregate body aſſembles, and as that happens, they are either continued in, or deprived of their truſt.

It is evident, from what has been already ſaid, that one mode of inſuring efficacy to the Petitions, is a communication of ſentiment between the bodies petitioning. But in what manner is this to be compaſſed without correſpondence; by whom is this correſpondence to be made, or to whom directed; or how is the ſubject matter to be digeſted, or any ſcheme of national union or reform to be adapted for the public eye, without the intervention of Committees? All propoſitions to be laid before a popular aſſembly ever have, and from the nature of things ever muſt be, previouſly framed by the private conſultations of a few leading men in the cabinet. Wiſe and temperate meaſures can only originate from calm retirement, and cool reflection: it will be the

more

more peculiar province of the many to adopt or reject the reſult of theſe deliberations. "Self love, the ſtrongeſt ſpring in the human, nay, in the whole animal ſyſtem," will direct their choice, and watch over their intereſts. If every man were left to his own ideas, there would be as many projects to canvas, as men to frame or propoſe them. Diſtraction, diſguſt, perhaps deſpair might enſue, and from the bigotry of ſome to the children of their own fancy, and the common confuſion of all, probably no meaſures, or poſſibly the moſt violent would be purſued.* Having thus ſtated the neceſſity of Committees, I truſt it will not be advancing too much to aſſert, that adjourned meetings follow of conſequence. Without the one the other would poſſeſs, or might conceive they poſſeſſed inherit, uncontrouled powers, and from the depravity incident to human nature, might be tempted to loſe ſight of the objects of their inſtitution. On the contrary the ſhadow is not more difficult to be ſeparated from the ſubſtance, than Committees from their adjourned Aſſemblies, in contemplation of which they alone have

* If it be objected that General Meetings were the parents of Committees, and ſtill no ſuch confuſion enſued—I muſt beg leave to obſerve that the gentlemen who procured the former, acted at thoſe aſſemblies as to all eſſential points in the capacity of the latter.

have exiſtence, and the inſtant the General Meeting ſtands either unadjourned, or adjourned, *ſine die*, the Committee diſſolves of courſe, and all its truſts and offices are annulled. Are therefore theſe ſervants of the popular Meetings, whoſe powers are confined within ſuch narrow bounds, to be conſidered in the light of a new ſyſtem of repreſentation, inconſiſtent with the genius of our Conſtitution? Before they can be pronounced dangerous, you muſt preſuppoſe them permanent, and uncontrouled. No propoſition can be more juſt than that every aſſembly lawfully conſtituted may adjourn for convenience, in order to avoid that great abſurdity of being obliged to leave all buſineſs unfiniſhed which cannot be compleated in the ſhort period of a day. Are the people to be ſo careleſs of the ſucceſs of their Petitions? Are they to be ſo dead to all ſenſe of joy and grief, that they muſt after the moſt important reſolutions immediately diſperſe, without an idea of being re-aſſembled to learn the event of that in which they are ſo intimately intereſted? Why ſhould Parliament be deprived of the moſt grateful ſounds that can enchant the ears of virtuous guardians of the ſtate, of the applauſe to be expreſſed in the addreſſes of ſatisfied Petitioners at their adjourned Meetings? If there be any who ſtill object to the adjournment

journment of theſe Aſſemblies, let them ſpeak out, and declare their real ſentiments. They muſt be inimical to the right of petitioning; they ſhrink from the touch of a popular Meeting, and wiſh to render them as infrequent as poſſible, by reducing the principal Freeholders to the neceſſity of applying to officers appointed by the Crown; or of having recourſe to the recent mode of advertiſing in their own names to the county at large, which is always troubleſome, and in ſome inſtances may have the air of party. Such motives, however, and ſuch reaſoning, I will here conſign over to the oblivion they equally merit, and ſhall proceed to point out the benefits which have already ariſen, and may further reſult from the Aſſociations.

The avowed objects of this union are, the ſucceſs of the Petitions, and the reſtoration of Parliamentary freedom. The integrity of Parliament has been ſublimely figured as "a kind of palladium, a tutelary "goddeſs, who protects our ſtate." There have been frequent endeavours to ſupplant this immaculate deity, and to ſubſtitute a golden calf, typical of the dæmon of proſtitution, upon her ſacred ſhrine. Attempts to govern abſolutely have in all æras of our hiſtory proved dangerous, oftentimes fatal

to the prince. To corrupt Parliament is a much ſafer mode of enſlaving the people. Tyranny is then eſtabliſhed under all the forms of law. The bulwarks indeed remain, but the garriſon is changed. To reſiſt becomes more dangerous, to ſubmit more painful. For ever execrated be the memory of Clifford, who firſt formally enliſted a mercenary band to ſerve Government in Parliament againſt the Conſtitution. The evil exiſted before, but was not effectually provided againſt at the Revolution. The Whigs of that day called aloud for more than mere declarations in favour of Parliamentary freedom. Annually choſen Parliaments they laboured to have reſtored, that the ends of corruption might be defeated.* Not only the principles of, but the aſſurances given at the Revolution well warranted their deſires. So much, however, had been done againſt prerogative, and the effects of influence appearing, at that time inconſiderable, counſels of this nature were rejected. In conjunction with the moderate Tories every thing had been done, and without their aid, nothing further could be effected. Even three years were thought by Revolution Whigs to be too long a term for the great Legiſlative

 truſt,

* Conſiderations concerning the State of the Nation, by Mr. Hambden. A. D. 1692.

truſt, and, wonderful to relate, in little more than twenty years afterwards, ſeptennial Parliaments were introduced by men who knew nothing of Whiggiſm but the name. Influence has ſince increaſed beyond all ratios of proportion, not even appearing to keep pace with any thing, but one of its principal cauſes, the national debt. This little cloud, which, at its riſing from the ſea, ſeemed no bigger than a man's hand, now widely diffuſed, overſhadows the land, and threatens univerſal ruin. We have been told of a miniſter, who made corruption his principle of government, who affirmed that every man had his price, and he was ſuppoſed to have experienced this melancholy truth, in the courſe of a very long and fatal adminiſtration. As to the principle, it is ſubverſive of our liberties, and, if admitted, our well-mixed Conſtitution muſt diſſolve before it, like wax in meridian ſunbeams. As to the aſſertion in one ſenſe, it may be ſafely acceded to, for the price, or rather the reward, of public virtue, is that private ſatisfaction and public applauſe ſo aſſuredly acquired by her votaries. Theſe are truly laudable objects, and nothing inconſiſtent with a love of our country can obtain them. A miniſter does not purchaſe but commands the votes of Parliament, when his meaſures are popular, and beneficial

ficial to the ſtate. This is the real influence, that alone is conſtitutional. How different was the meaning of the above aſſertion, which is tantamount to the exclamation of Jugurtha, "*O urbem venalem, "et maturé perituram, ſi emptorem inve-"nerit!*" I cannot ſufficiently reprobate the man who had ſo deſpicable an opinion of human nature, ſo unwarranted an opinion of Engliſhmen, to ſuppoſe that gold could ſeduce that from them, which the fear of death, and the arms of tyrants, had only made them claſp the cloſer to their boſoms. The bold exertions of miſconceived prerogative are generous, when compared to the mean inſinuations of proſtituted influence. Aſk the engineer, whether an hidden ſap be leſs dangerous than an open aſſault? Enquire of yourſelves whether you moſt dread an undiſcovered thief in your houſhold, or a violent robber from without? But to leave figurative expreſſions, let us apply their ſubſtance. A government in this country muſt be ſupported either by popularity or corruption. The concluſion is but too obvious, when applied to the preſent Adminiſtration. Are further proofs required? The plain anſwers to a few ſimple queſtions will furniſh them. Wherefore is a ſeat in Parliament become now ſo valuable, which the ſimplicity of our an-

ceſſors paid a man for accepting? Why are the members of either houſe ſo ſuddenly converted as to political principles, without being able to give one avowed reaſon for their inconſiſtency? Is the Miniſter, like the Pope, infallible, or do the Majority always fortuitouſly vote with him? Have a number of lucrative places holden during pleaſure, no tendency to bias the votes either of the electors, or the elected? Is any one fact more notorious than the operation of influence upon the national councils of this kingdom? Has the man who entertains a doubt upon the ſubject been preſent at the choice of Repreſentatives for what is ſtyled "a Government Borough?" Does he know that a majority of the truly independent men in both houſes oppoſe the meaſures of Adminiſtration? Does he believe that ten thouſand electors are as eaſily corrupted as one hundred, or that a man of large property will betray his own intereſt ſo readily, as a man who has no intereſt of his own to betray? Will he obſerve the votes of thoſe who repreſent the greater numbers, or poſſeſs the larger ſhare of property, and then candidly account for the difference of ſentiment he may find in men of another deſcription?

But to quit this ground, which ſeems altogether

together inexpugnable, let us for a moment close our eyes, and allow that the cry of influence in the Legislature, is only popular clamour. Still the integrity of Parliament, like the chastity of Cæsar's wife, should not even be suspected: if these Associations are to be the means of clearing away the aspersion, they are means productive of the happiest effect. No man, however, will seriously insist, that either House can be entirely freed from influence; while avarice and bad ambition are implanted in the heart of man, on the one hand, and the means of gratification, in some measure inseparable from prerogative, on the other, it is merely theoretical to suppose that the door can ever be entirely shut against its admission. But may we not combine, may we not associate, to confine this baleful tide within the narrowest bounds. The sea-subduing Hollander never refuses to repair his dykes, because the ocean has once broken through, or undermined them. It may, and what is more, it has been alledged, *that the Crown has not power enough.* This has been urged as an argument against curtailing Parliamentary influence. No position can be more undeniable, than that the Crown should be independent; but in the name of every thing that is sacred, let not the independence of one, arise from the

dependence

dependance of the other eſtates; rather let ſome limitations be taken off, and new powers given, only let the additional ſtrength be firſt fully proved neceſſary, and the extent of it afterwards accurately defined. With the views therefore of a general financial reform, and of rendering our repreſentation as pure as poſſible, theſe Aſſociations have been deviſed. Their objects are ſtrictly conſonant to conſtitutional principles; their meaſures, if we can truſt their repeated avowals, will be the ſame. The time approaches, when the people will be called upon to exerciſe their ſhare in the Legiſlation. They muſt know from experience the importance of the choice they are about to make. At this criſis, our exiſtence as a free ſtate more peculiarly depends upon their judgment. To aſſociate therefore againſt the re-election of thoſe who have already proved themſelves unworthy, or againſt the ſucceſs of thoſe whoſe principles or ſituations may juſtly render them ſuſpected; to unite, as it were, in a Theban Band, to ſupport, and to bring forward, into the moſt confidential poſts, men, who are above ſuſpicion, as well from their integrity, as fortunes, is a national union, of all others the moſt to be deſired, and the leaſt to be feared, by a lover of his country. Combinations of this

nature

nature can never be dangerous to the peace of ſociety. They will be numerous, and conſequently powerful only in proportion to the juſtice of the principles on which they act. The bulk of a people are ever difficult to be detached from an eſtabliſhed government, even in caſes where they are juſtified in reſiſting open, or ſecret attacks, upon their liberties. They will bear much, and fear more, rather than ſacrifice that peace, ſo deſervedly valued above every other bleſſing inferior to freedom. The power of the people is not the avenger of private wrongs, or partial grievances; it is ever ſlow to act, but inevitable in its activity.

I muſt be allowed a few words more, by way of caution, relative to the choice of Repreſentatives. Amongſt all the deſcriptions of political men, none are to be regarded with a more jealous eye than thoſe who ſtyle themſelves "*The King's Friends.*" Are there then a few individuals ſufficiently meritorious to arrogate this enviable title to themſelves, which the meaneſt of his Majeſty's loyal ſubjects may claim without preſumption? Surely theſe gentlemen would not uſurp the appellation excluſively, they might then create too many domeſtic enemies to their Royal maſter. Does their friendſhip

friendſhip lead them to follow the will of the Prince implicitly, and to eſtabliſh, as far as their power permits, that will over his ſubjects. If theſe be the tenets of a King's Friend, I heſitate not to pronounce him an enemy not only to the King, but to the Conſtitution. Inaſmuch as true friendſhip is founded in virtue, ſuch friendſhip muſt be merely ſpecious, intereſted, and dangerous. This attachment, which men ſo arrogantly uſe as a medium to concentrate the rays of Royal ſunſhine into a focus upon their own heads, cannot mean an extraordinary degree of affectionate loyalty to the perſon of the Sovereign, for that would be leſs confined as to perſons: if it mean any thing, it muſt mean a paſſion for the Kingly Eſtate, above all other conſiderations. How pure the motives of this paſſion may be, I leave for the deciſion of others: the effects of it however are too alarming, and from ſuch hands the people may fairly apprehend, either formally, or in effect, nothing leſs than a ſurrender of their liberties. The beſt quality for their Repreſentatives to poſſeſs, is a perfect impartiality between the three eſtates; as this in the abſtract may be rather difficult to find, the bias to be preferred is that, which leans againſt the power of the Prince, and inclines towards the rights of the people.

It is impoſſible at this moment, not to ſee the good effects which have already ſprung from the Petitions, Committees, and embrio Aſſociations. In the preceding years of the war, nothing could equal the improvidence that granted the public treaſure, except the dilatorineſs and diſſatisfaction with which the expenditure was accounted for. The voice of the people, or of a part of the people (if any ſet of men willingly forego the honor of having given ſalutary counſel) is heard; Reformation and Plans of Oeconomy are on the tapis: a blow is aimed at the influence of the Crown: the Miniſter, with all his advantages, at the cloſe of a Septennial Parliament, muſt, with his doubtful majority, exclaim, "ſuch another "victory will ruin us!"* He makes ſome conceſſions, and wiſhes to appear at leaſt willing to meet the Prayer of the Petitions, taking at the ſame time eſpecial care that the power of himſelf and his ſucceſſors ſhall not be diminiſhed. He ſtrongly oppoſes all attacks upon that baſtard of prerogative, influence. I cannot help here addreſſing him in the words of the noble author of the Diſſertation upon Parties. "It is the du-"ty of thoſe who govern, to diſcern the "ſpirit of the people, to conſider even

 "their

* Since writing the above, the houſhold troops have been defeated on one clauſe of Mr. Burke's bill.

" their paſſions, to have a regard to their " weakneſſes, and to ſhew indulgence to " their prejudices; miniſters, who puniſh " what they might prevent, are more cul- " pable than thoſe who offend." Here I quit Adminiſtration, and forbear further conſideration, either of what they have done, or are likely to do at this criſis. " I " had rather exhort than reproach, eſpeci- " cially at a time when a ſtrong tendency " appears among men of all denominations, " to ſuch a national union as will effectu- " ally obtain the compleat ſettlement of " our Conſtitution, which hath been ſo " long delayed, if it be honeſtly, prudent- " ly, and vigorouſly improved.*" I conclude my fellow countrymen, with that which I ardently hope will make the deepeſt impreſſion; you are embarked in a great cauſe, which temerity and party ſpirit will unavoidably overthrow, but conſtancy and prudence effectually accompliſh. If the ſtate have already imbibed the ſmalleſt particle of corruption, counteract the poiſon e'er the mortification become general, and all remedy be too late. Remember that your right of election, ſo near at hand, is an obvious, lenient, and conſtitutional antidote to this baleful influence. Chooſe men of ſufficient honor to ſhorten the term for which

* Bolingbroke on Parties.

which their truſt is delegated, and of ſufficient integrity to remove, or at leaſt to withſtand, temptation. Recommend Oeconomy in the ſtate as a certain road to liberty and opulence at home, to fame and victory abroad. Above all, be yourſelves that which you require of your Repreſentatives. If the root be free from rottenneſs, the purer juices will ſoon invigorate the trunk. Be unanimous, conſtant, and incorrupt! Free without faction, loyal without ſervility! May you never have recourſe to thoſe arms (except againſt the common foe) which it is your birthright to have, and uſe, for your protection, until you are driven to make choice of that dreadful alternative, "Whether it is better to die like freemen, "or to live enſlaved."

FINIS.